San Francisco Department of Public Health

Youth Development Standards of Practice

Title	**Youth Development Standards of Practice**
Adoption Date	Adopted July 7, 2004
Review Dates	Annually
Oversight	Director of Department of Public Health
Authors	Youth Development Committee Members and DPH Staff
Sections Affected	All Department of Public Health (DPH) providers (including a phasing-in of contractors) who deliver services to youth up to the age of 24.
Purpose	These standards of practice are designed to ensure that youth-serving programs and activities are consistent with the youth development approach and practice. The ultimate goal is to create healthy and safe environments where young people can transition successfully into adulthood.

Guiding Principles

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT –
Process: Youth development is the physical, social, and emotional process all young people experience as they transition from childhood to adulthood. During this time, young people seek ways to meet their basic needs and to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to lead a healthy life.

Approach: The youth development approach to service delivery is designed to support young people as they move through adolescence and into adulthood. A youth development approach recognizes and builds upon the assets and strengths of youth, instead of focusing on what young people lack (also referred to as a deficit approach). Youth thus become legitimate, essential partners in the creation and maintenance of healthy and safe communities.

Practice: In order to ensure that young people receive the support they need to learn and grow, programs will: (1) bring families and communities together to build safe and supportive environments for youth, (2) foster meaningful youth participation, (3) provide opportunities for youth involvement in the community, (4) create challenging and engaging learning experiences which build resiliency skills.

ADOLESCENTS & YOUNG ADULTS –
• Adolescence and young adulthood are pivotal periods for youth to acquire the attitudes, competencies, values, and social connections that will help carry them forward to successful adulthood.

• All adolescents and young adults need generous amounts of support, instruction, limit-setting, and caring as they make their way from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood.

• It is critical during this period for adolescents to have opportunities which will enhance their assets and talents, help them to form positive relationships with peers and adults, and empower them to actively take part in their communities and neighborhoods.

YOUTH SERVING AGENCIES & PROGRAMS –
• Adopting a youth development approach requires that youth-serving programs move from a problem-based mentality to a strengths-based framework. Focusing on the value of youth to society cultivates opportunities in which youth meaningfully connect with and engage in their school, community, and family.

• Youth-serving programs recognize the importance of community collaboration, and work to holistically enhance the healthy behaviors and outcomes of youth over the long-term.

• Organizational practices support youth development through youth-led ongoing training, evaluation, and networking.

• Youth-serving organizations embrace an internal environment of inclusiveness, responsiveness, and continuity.

• Policies such as the Cultural Competency policy, the Minor Consent policy, and the Harm Reduction policy support the goals of youth development and will be adhered to by all youth serving programs.

Youth Development Standards of Practice

102.01 Youth Development Implementation: <u>Organizational</u> Structure, Culture, and Environment
Standards of Practice

<table>
<tr>
<td>
All youth-serving agencies providing services to youth, up to age 24, will have
a) a safe, sustainable organizational structure with built-in mechanisms for youth decision-making and participation.
b) staff and youth participants which reflect the underlying cultural, social, and linguistic diversity of the local, target community.
c) qualified, trained staff with adequate* client/staff ratio;
d) a physical environment that is appropriate for clients' developmental, gender, sexual identity, cultural needs, and physical and mental abilities;
e) appropriate physical space for programming.

*Adequate client/staff ratios are both program and age-specific. For guidelines and common practices, please refer to the glossary.
</td>
<td>

Structure
1. The organization's governance structure will complement youth development principles such that youth will play an active role in how decisions are made, staff positions will be designed to support youth-driven work, and communication mechanisms will be established to listen to and incorporate youth and community voice.

2. Organizational policies will promote staff retention through training and job development in order to promote continuity and dependability.

3. Providers will ensure an age-appropriate and program specific staff-to-client ratio.

Culture
4. Youth-serving organizations will create an internal culture of mutual respect, creativity, and open communication. This culture will support both staff and participant retention and help to build trust and confidence between client and staff.

5. Youth will participate in designing and enforcing behavioral rules, expectations, and consequences for noncompliance.

6. Behavioral expectations that demand respect for staff, youth, and parents will be both clear and fair. Expectations and rules will be posted in common areas, in age- and culturally-appropriate language.

7. Youth-serving organizations will have in place procedures to ensure a client's right to privacy.

Physical Environment
8. Youth serving agencies will provide safe and reliable activities and spaces during hours that are accessible to school-aged youth.

9. Service sites will be well lit, well maintained and entrances will ensure safe passage to programs.

10. Physical spaces will be decorated in an age-appropriate manner that is welcoming to students of all cultures, backgrounds, and genders.

11. Program settings will be free from violence and unsafe health conditions such as environmental hazards, infectious agents, and conditions leading to unintentional and intentional injuries.

</td>
</tr>
</table>

102.02 Youth Development Implementation: <u>Programmatic</u> structure, youth-participation and skill building
Standards of Practice

All youth-serving agencies that provide services to youth up to age 24, will ensure meaningful youth participation, skill building and vocational/career development.	1. Youth will play a meaningful, active role in programmatic planning, implementation, and evaluation. Meaningful participation includes opportunities for intergenerational decision-making, developing and practicing leadership and advocacy skills, and entering into an equitable partnership with adults. 2. Compensation for youth work – in the form of stipends, academic credit, or in-kind payments – is strongly encouraged so as to 1) acknowledge the importance of youth's contributions, 2) provide youth with work experience, and 3) enhance job development skills. 3. Programs will facilitate personal development through opportunities for independent decision-making and positive risk-taking in a fun and supportive environment sensitive to developmental and cultural needs. 4. Programs will promote the acquisition of life skills and the integration of physical, social, mental, and behavioral health. 5. Staff interactions with youth will emphasize openness, positive reinforcement, positive modeling, and constructive feedback.

102.03 Youth Development Implementation: Community and Family Connections
Standards of Practice

All agencies providing services to youth, up to age 24, will incorporate youth development principles and practices into its programs to promote and enhance the coordination between family, school, and the community.	1. Parents, guardians, and community members will serve as active members in programmatic decision-making processes. 2. Youth will have opportunities to explore their own social and cultural heritage as well as those of others in order to promote inclusiveness, multicultural competence, and respect. 3. Programs will help youth make meaningful connections across the different settings of their lives – including family, school and the community. 4. Youth will have opportunities to engage in, contribute, and feel committed to their various communities. 5. Programs will work to form partnerships and collaborations with other organizations to better meet youth's needs. 6. Programs will teach youth practical advocacy skills so they can learn how to navigate and access community resources.

102.04 Youth Development Implementation: Training, Evaluation and Monitoring *Standards of Practice*	
All agencies providing services to youth, up to age 24, will receive training on current youth development principles and practices, and performance measures will be established and monitored to assure compliance and continuous improvement.	1. Youth development training and ongoing technical assistance will be offered by the San Francisco Department of Public Health (DPH) and community partners to DPH staff and contractors who work with youth. 2. All programs will include youth development standards of practice assessments within their annual evaluation plans. 3. Youth will be involved in/conduct evaluation of all programs and have the ability to hold programs accountable for evaluation findings. 4. Evaluation findings will be used for ongoing, results-based staff and quality improvement.

Authorizations			
Divisions	**Signature**	**Adoption Date**	**Effective Date**
Department of Public Health (DPH)	Mitchell H. Katz, M.D., Director of Health		
DPH Division of Community Programs	Barbara A. Garcia, Director		

DEFINITIONS

Adolescent: An individual in the period of transition between puberty and adulthood, roughly between 10 and 24 years of age. Adolescence is a period of intense physical and psychosocial changes. Adolescents experience not only physical growth and change but also emotional, psychological, social, and mental change and growth, usually beginning and ending in the second decade of life.

Advocacy: The process of researching, collecting and using information to strategically challenge the status-quo, modify policies, and reform schools and communities which impact the lives of youth.

Assets: Factors that promote positive adolescent development, and lead to the adoption of healthy behaviors and actions. Assets may be external factors such as positive relationships with family, friends, school, and the community, or internal factors reflecting a young person's personal convictions and attitudes. The Search Institute has identified 40 critical assets, naming the external asset categories as support, boundaries and expectations, and time use. Internal asset groupings include educational commitment, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity.

Deficits: Defined by the Search Institute as influences that can interfere with healthy development, limit access to and development of assets, and ease the way into risky behavior. The Search Institute, a national non-profit organization, conducts research on young people's developmental assets and offers quantitative assessments on the value of assets versus deficits.

Constructive Feedback: Regular feedback on progress is necessary so that students understand what they know and what they still need to learn and master. Constructive feedback differs from criticism in that it focuses on a student's strengths and how to apply those strengths to personal growth areas.

Positive risk-taking: Willingness to learn new things, discover new passions, make mistakes, and confront challenges without obvious solutions, such that one's personal growth, integrity, and accomplishments are enhanced.

Community Involvement: The activities that increase young people's knowledge of the community beyond the program and allow them to give back to the community, and experiences a sense of connection to it. These experiences, along with concrete knowledge of the community and its resources, are critical for promoting young people's healthy development and learning.

Low staff/client ratio: Low staff-youth ratios and group sizes allow staff to meet the needs of youth, and allow youth to make their voice heard. Staff-youth ratios vary according to the ages and abilities of youth. For groups of youth six and older, a 1:15 ratio of adult staff to youth is recommended.

Organizational structure: The formal system of working relationships within an organization, identifying connections between different functions and positions of the management and staff. An organization's structure consists of (1) determining what activities need to be accomplished, (2) grouping the identified activities in terms of functionality, and (3) staffing the structure with the appropriate personnel skills to perform the designated activities in a coordinated manner.

Organizational culture: A pattern of basic assumptions, values, and norms which guide behavior inside an organization.

Support: (1) Emotional: being caring and responsive; (2) Instrumental: providing guidance that is useful to young people.

Youth Development: The ongoing growth process in which all youth are engaged in attempting to (1) meet their basic personal and social needs to be safe, feel cared for, be valued, be useful, and be spiritually grounded, and (2) to build skills and competencies that allow them to function and contribute in their daily lives.

Youth-led: Allowing youth to take ownership over the creation, implementation, and evaluation of projects and initiatives. Adults guide and support the work of youth, rather than control or direct it.

Youth: Persons under the age of 24 undergoing constant physical, social, and emotional growth and development.

Youth Participation: Includes opportunities for intergenerational decision-making, developing and practicing leadership and advocacy skills, and entering into an equitable partnership with adults.

References

- Blyth, Dale; Roehlkepartain, Eugene C. "A new study highlights what youth need from communities." *Source Newsletter,* May 1992. www.search-institute.org/archives/wt.htm

- Community Network for Youth Development. The DPH Standards of Practice were influenced by CNYD's research-based Youth Development Framework for Practice which is accessible on their website: www.cnyd.org

- Youth Leadership Institute. http://www.yli.org/. The "Standards of Practice" presented in this document are based on years of work and insight by many institutions, including Youth Leadership Institute (YLI). Whereas YLI also has "Standards of Practice" they are different from the "Standards of Practice" presented herein.

- National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine. "Community Programs to Promote Youth Development." Washington D.C: National Academy Press, 2002.

- Pittman, Karen. Diversi, Marcelo. Ferber, Thaddeus. Social Policy Supports for Adolescence in the Twenty-First Century: Framing Questions. *Journal of Research on Adolescence. Adolescents' Preparation for the Future: Perils and Promise: A Report of the Study Group on Adolescence in the Twenty-First Century.* 12(1):149-158, 2002.